

Confidential Claim Retracted

Authorized by: SL

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Programs Officer, Division of Energy & Mineral Resources, Golden CO

Request for Assistance from the U. S. Geological Survey

Director, Office of Trust Responsibilities

Since 1953, Anaconda Minerals Company has been mining uranium ore from their Jackpile - Paguate Mine located on the Laguna Indian Reservation, New Mexico. Because of the depressed uranium market and the rapid declining price for uranium concentrate (from \$43/lb  $U_3O_8$  in June, 1979 to \$17/lb in September, 1982), mining operations were discontinued in 1982 and the mine was decommissioned and closed permanently.

In December 1980, the Department of the Interior determined that the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement was required and that it should address reclamation of the mine site and the affected adjacent areas.

One of the major concerns of the Pueblo of Laguna is the structural damage of homes in the Village of Paguate. The Pueblo maintains that Anaconda is responsible for the damage and desires to negotiate a settlement with the company on this issue. However, with the data presently available it is difficult to prove to what extent the damages were caused by mining operations in the near by pits.

In their investigations, Anaconda has directed the attention chiefly to the seismic effects of their rock blasting operations. The results were not very convincing. They also seem to have a bias in favor of the company. Therefore, a more comprehensive and systematic study, which would generate the information necessary to determine whether or not the home damages were caused by blasting and/or other actions related to past mining activities is needed and should be given the highest priority. A written request, dated August 19, 1983, to assist the Pueblo and the BIA in such a study was sent to the Office of Earthquakes, Volcanos and Engineering of the U. S. Geological Survey. A copy of the letter is attached.

In response to our request Mr. Ken King of the above mentioned office visited the Village of Paguate on September 13, 1983. Based on his observations, made during the inspection of several structures and buildings in the village, Mr. King is of the opinion that some of the damage may be related to the mining operations and that new techniques and methods, developed in the last 5 years, should be used to examine the possible effects of mining on the Village of Paguate. He also stated



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that structural damage does not necessarily have to be caused by seismic vibrations with peak velocities exceeding maximum values generally considered as acceptable. Vibrations with lower than the acceptable maximum values but in tune with the structure of the dwelling are capable of causing damage also.

A short report on his inspection visit and a suggested plan of action were submitted by Mr. King in a letter, dated October 6, 1983. A copy of this letter is also attached. This office is in support of the plan which, if implemented would cost \$100,000 and recommend approval. Due to policies and priorities under which the Office of Earthquakes, Volcanos and Engineering has to operate, an official request for assistance from the Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs is needed to have the USGS make Mr. Ken King available to carry out the study and to give the project top priority.

Enclosed is a memorandum drafted for Assistant Secretary Mr. Ken Smith. This memorandum, addressed to the Assistant Secretary of Energy and Minerals, requests technical assistance from the USGS to investigate the possible effects of mining on the Village of Paguete and to assign Mr. Kenneth King of the Office of Earthquakes, Volcanos and Engineering to the project, supported by personnel and equipment as needed to perform the tasks as outlined.

David L. Baldwin

cc: Area Director, Albuquerque Area Office  
Superintendent, Laguna Agency  
Governor, Pueblo of Laguna